

Pete Stark's Legislative Report, April 2009

Monday, 30 March 2009

In This issue:

- Health Insurance Survey
- Strengthening Our Schools
- Modernizing Our Health Records System
- Investing In Our Community
- Helping Unemployed Workers Maintain Health Coverage

STRENGTHENING OUR SCHOOLS

A strong educational system is critical to ensuring that our children are well prepared and have opportunities in the future.

Unfortunately, all of our local schools, childcare centers, colleges, and universities have been hit hard by the recession. Strained budgets lead to teacher lay-offs, crowded classrooms, less childcare, and fewer opportunities for students to pursue higher education.

To counter the impact of the recession on education, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 1) makes vital investments in public education. The bill includes:

- \$8.5 billion in direct aid for California's public education system;
- \$420 million for child care and Head Start programs;
- \$755 million in additional Pell Grant assistance; and
- A new \$2,500 partially refundable tax credit to help pay for California's more than 500,000 college students.

With the passage of H.R. 1, school districts throughout the 13th District will be able to retain teachers, modernize and repair their buildings, and make other improvements that will help students reach their full potential.

The funds will come through three primary sources: Title I (which is based on the number of low and moderate income students in a school district); the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (which is based on the number of students in a school district receiving special education services); and a new State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. This Fund can be used to reverse budget cuts, retain teachers and other personnel, and modernize school buildings and technology equipment.

Our school districts will receive the following amounts:

- Alameda City Unified: \$2.795 million
- San Leandro Unified: \$2.345 million
- San Lorenzo Unified: \$3.498 million
- Fremont Unified: \$8.342 million
- Hayward Unified: \$9.055 million
- New Haven: \$3.541 million
- Newark: \$1.889 million

These investments will create and save jobs, improve student achievement, and make long-term investments in our educational system.

I was pleased to vote for this increased investment and will work to improve our commitment to provide every child a quality education.

Pete's April 2009 Town Meetings

Monday, April 6th

6:30-7:30 PM

Fremont Library

Fukaya Room A

2400 Stevenson Blvd.

Fremont

Tuesday, April 7th

6:30-7:30 PM

San Leandro Library

Lecture Hall

300 Estudillo Avenue

San Leandro

NOTE EVENING TIMES

MODERNIZING OUR HEALTH RECORDS SYSTEM

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that was signed into law in February (H.R. 1) includes a billion for health information technology (IT). I authored the electronic health record provisions that will help modernize our nation's healthcare record system, and create new jobs in the medical and technology sectors.

Congressman Pete Stark joins other members of Congress and health care leaders for a demonstration of health care information technology.

Today, most doctors and hospitals still use paper medical records. This leads to administrative waste, medical errors, and unnecessary tests and procedures. Our nation's health record system has been in desperate need of modernization, and the health IT provisions in H.R. 1 address this need.

The bill sets standards for health IT systems, so that systems across the country can talk to one another. The bill provides financial incentives for doctors and hospitals to adopt these systems. It includes important privacy protections on patient's personal medical history.

It is expected that 70 percent of hospitals and 90 percent of physicians will adopt these health IT systems within the next ten years. The federal government will save \$12 billion across public health programs like Medicare, and consumers will save billions more with lower premiums for private insurance.

As we look ahead to broader reform of our health care system this year, I am pleased that we have already taken a critical step toward updating our health information technology for the 21st Century.

INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY

One of the most critical things we can do to keep our economy on track is to invest in our communities. This means funding shovel-ready projects that will help keep our community strong through environmental assistance, job training, transportation improvements, and other essential social services.

Several key provisions in this year's omnibus appropriations bill (H.R. 1105) will fund many important projects in our area:

- \$1.38 million to help restore the Alameda Creek Watershed;
- \$192,000 for studies that will help increase flood protection for homes near the Estudillo Canal and Laguna Creek in San Leandro;
- \$237,000 for a green energy job retraining program at the Peralta Community College District;
- \$476,000 for a program by First Five Alameda County that helps screen children ages 0-5 and coordinate care for children at risk of developmental and socio-emotional delays;
- \$530,000 for the Children's Assessment Center that helps place children who have been removed from their homes by Child Protective Services;
- \$475,000 for pedestrian safety improvements for the Park Street Business District of Alameda;
- \$475,000 for Union City's BART Station.

For a more comprehensive list of projects, please [click here](#).

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 1) will also provide critical funding for our area. Over the next few weeks and months as the money is awarded, you can track funds that are coming to our community at www.recovery.gov.

I will continue to work for robust investments for our community.

Health Insurance Survey

So that I can know what is most important to our community, I've developed a short survey on health insurance. Please [click here](#) to share your views on health reform with me. I will publish the results online and bring them to a future town meeting as well.

HELPING UNEMPLOYED WORKERS MAINTAIN HEALTH COVERAGE

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 1), I was pleased to author a new, temporary program to help protect health coverage for people who've lost their jobs in our ravaged economy.

COBRA coverage provides a vital lifeline for workers between jobs. It is a federal program that allows people to maintain their employer's health insurance coverage for themselves—and their families—for a period of time (typically 18 months) after they've separated from their job. Unfortunately, the coverage is very expensive. Family premiums average more than \$1,000 a month.

H.R. 1 provides a 65 percent subsidy for up to nine months for COBRA continuation coverage for workers (and their families) who have been involuntarily terminated. The assistance is limited to individuals with annual incomes below \$125,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for families.

The subsidy in H.R. 1 is estimated to help seven million people maintain their health insurance while they are between jobs.

If you think you might be eligible for this program, please visit the Department of Labor website at www.dol.gov/COBRA for more information. I also recommend that you reach out to your former employer to express your intent to enroll so that the subsidy will be quickly obtained. Eligible participants will pay 35 percent of their full COBRA premium to their former employer and the federal government will make up the difference.

Contact Information

Please contact my Fremont office, send me an email, or browse this website for assistance with federal agencies, updates on important legislation, and information on visits to Washington, D.C.

Fremont Office:

(510) 494-1388

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